



STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

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STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
Department of Genetics
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May 19, 1977

Dr. Ruth Kirschstein, Director
National Institute of General Medical Sciences
Bethesda, MD 20014

Dear Dr. Kirschstein,

One of our excellent postdoctoral trainees, Dr. Jane Gillen, interrupted her postdoctoral traineeship recently for the legitimate and laudable purpose of having a baby. All went well, until she sought some weeks later to resume her work in the department on a part-time basis, when we encountered the bureaucratic turn-down which is documented in the enclosed correspondence. We are all agreed that it would be unduly stressful for her to attempt a more than half-time commitment away from her baby until at least this September. I suspect that it will not be possible to straighten out this situation for the result to be altogether helpful in the instant case, but I wish to bring the matter to your attention to help avert future hardships.

While we can all understand the intent in the guidelines to filter out what might be viewed as frivolous commitments of a less than full-time character; and we can also envisage certain abuses if care is not taken; it is obvious that the stringent application of this "no part-time appointment" policy is unnecessarily prejudicial and even discriminatory with respect to the career interest of women seeking to retain their foothold in an investigative career. This matter has my personal sympathy both as a matter of principle and from somewhat comparable experiences in my own family during the past three years. I hope I may have found a sympathetic ear, and that you may be in a position to undertake some steps toward remedial action.

These regulations seem particularly bizarre in contrast to the very strong pressure that the institution continues to face both in principle and by regulation from other branches of the Department of HEW to make any reasonable accommodation to women interested in academic careers, and to avoid practices that cannot be inherently justified and which in practice result in gratuitous obstacles.

With best regards,

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics